

3 Ways to Get to the Root of Anger

“Why are you so angry?” my son asked me after I had a tough day and took it out on him.

It would have been easy to disregard his comment and disregard my anger, but it made me think instead. It can be easy to push aside our anger without any real effort to get to the root of it. However, I think it’s time we take my son’s advice and ask ourselves, “Why are you so angry?”

In his book *Mad About Us: Moving From Anger to Intimacy With Your Spouse*, Dr. Gary Oliver writes on the effects of ignoring your anger. He compared bouts of anger to a flashing warning light coming on in our cars. When we see that blinking red light, we work to solve it in order to avoid bigger problems with our car in the future.

In the same way, we cannot ignore small amounts of anger here and there in our lives, or it too will lead to bigger problems. In his book, Dr. Oliver points out, “Over the years, we’ve discovered that whenever we ignore or bury an emotion, it is buried alive. At some time and in some way, that ignored or buried emotion will express itself—physically, psychologically, or spiritually.” By addressing our anger as it comes, we will be able to stop this strong emotion from building up.

Here are three ways to help answer the question, “Why are you so angry?”

1. **Face it.** Don’t avoid the red warning light out of fear. The most important thing is to first face the fact that we all struggle with anger. As humans, we naturally react emotionally to distressing situations.

2. Find it. Next, after facing it, we must find the root of the anger that is lodged deep within us. Common roots of anger include fear, pain and frustration. For example, some people become angry as a fearful reaction to uncertainty, to fear of losing a job or to fear of failure. Others become angry when they are hurt in relationships or are caused pain by close friends. When it comes to me, the root of my anger is often found in all the little frustrations I've let build up within me.

3. Figure it out. Once we've found the root of our anger, we will be able to figure out how to deal with it in a healthier way.

- **Deal with fear.** Sometimes the best way to face our fears is to write them out. By taking the time to examine what you're deeply afraid of on a piece of paper, you will be able to rationalize your thoughts. In the future, this may help keep fears from building up into anger.
- **Deal with pain.** If you're trapped and experiencing pain, go talk to the person who caused you pain right now. Whether the hurt is a result of a misunderstanding or an intentional attack, you won't be able to move forward until you discuss your pain with the person who hurt you. Only when confession and forgiveness are present will you be able to let go of your anger.
- **Deal with frustration.** While we can't always choose what happens to us, we *can* choose how to respond. So in response to frustrating moments, choose to dwell on the positive. Also, frustration is sometimes the result of unmet expectations. Make sure your expectations are realistic, and show grace if they are not fulfilled.

I'd like to leave you with Dr. Gary Oliver's words: "One of the many potentially positive aspects of anger is that it can serve as a very powerful and effective warning system. Healthy anger can help us identify problems and needs and provide us with the energy to do something about them."

When was the last time you were angry, and how did you deal with it? Please share by leaving a comment below.

Mark Merrill *is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .*